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Mpezeni

PREFACE

This study is based on twenty months' fieldwork among the Fort Jameson Ngoni of Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland which I undertook during 1946–9 as a research officer of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. I have already published a description of marital relations among these people as well as a general outline of their social organization. In this work I discuss their political system. I hope in a later publication to describe Ngoni village life.

The raw materials of the field anthropologist are the actions, sayings and writings of his informants, and I am deeply indebted to those many people who allowed me to make use of their knowledge and experience of Ngoni society and to join with them in their activities. It would be invidious to mention only some of the great number of people who helped me with my inquiries and I must content myself with this expression of gratitude and thanks to all who made my work possible. I hope that my writings do not betray their confidence or invade their privacy. I shall regard it as only a partial repayment of my debt to them if this book helps them and their neighbours to a better understanding of the world they live in.

I must, however, mention by name Paramount Chief Mpezeni Jere III, K.M., for the support which he gave my work in his country; and I have to thank Lomthunzi Cazingwa Nkhuwa, Councillor Zuwani Lukhezo Zulu III, and Mdani Kausha Tembo for the hospitality I enjoyed in their villages. M. B. Lukhero, my clerk throughout my stay in Ngoniland, introduced me to Ngoni ways of life and assisted me in my inquiries. This study is as much his as it is mine.

My fieldwork owes much to the co-operation and assistance given me by the Provincial Administration in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, by the missions and by planters and traders in the district. I am particularly indebted to Mr. D. B. Hall, District Commissioner, and Mrs. Hall for hospitality shown my family and myself, and it is a pleasure to recall the interest taken in my work by Mr. R. P. Bush, O.B.E., Secretary for African Affairs, and Mrs. Bush; Commander T. S. L. Fox-Pitt, O.B.E., R.N. (Retd.), Provincial Commissioner, and Mrs. Fox-Pitt; Mr. H. C. Bayldon, M.C., District Officer, and Mrs. Bayldon; Mr. H. J. Roberts, Provincial Education Officer, and Mrs. Roberts; Mr. M. K. Daka, Headmaster of the Ngoni Native Authority School; and in Nyasaland Mr. D. W. Saunders-Jones, O.B.E., Provincial Commissioner;

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000 Mr. M. N. Gandy, Assistant District Commissioner, and Mrs. Gandy. I received much assistance from The Rev. J. C. C. Pauw and The Rev. C. R. Kok, Dutch Reformed Church Mission; Mgr. Martin, Apostolic Prefect, and P. Kneer, White Fathers Mission; Miss A. S. Field, Universities' Mission to Central Africa; and Mr. Bambury, Seventh Day Adventist Mission. I am grateful to these and to many other friends for hospitality, information and encouragement, and for providing me with such pleasant interludes in the strenuous round of fieldwork.

[121] I have written this book as a social anthropologist, and from an anthropological point of view. The kind of inquiry I made, and the way in which I have tried to handle my data, have been largely determined by the guidance and instruction I have been privileged to receive from many masters at Cambridge, Cape Town, Oxford and London. To the late Mr. J. H. Driberg, my first teacher, I am especially indebted. His stimulating manner encouraged his pupils to disagree with him, and his manifest love of his subject forced me to reject one of his main propositions, that no one should think of taking up anthropology as a career. I am also indebted to Dr. G. E. Daniel and Dr. J. C. Trevor for early encouragement. To Professors Schapera, Evans-Pritchard, Fortes and Radcliffe-Brown I owe my grounding in the problems and methods of anthropology, and I am very grateful to them for the help they have given in lecture and discussion.

This whole study has been carried out under the direction and supervision of Professor Gluckman, and my debt to him is writ large throughout this volume. His continuing encouragement, assistance and careful criticism have deeply affected my work. My colleagues of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute have also largely helped to shape this book. Dr. J. C. Mitchell has always been stimulating in our discussions on common problems, and I have been helped by discussion and argument with Dr. E. Colson and Dr. I. G. Cunnison. In the field I had the benefit of parallel data collected by my colleagues from other areas, and was fortunate in being able to visit some of them myself. My thinking and writing have been profoundly influenced by this experience of working in a group, in which each member had his own field background and his own point of view to justify to his colleagues. At the same time [122] I am most grateful to the Trustees of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute for their financial support and for the freedom allowed me in my work.

114 In the field I was fortunate in collaborating with Mr. M. G. Marwick, Colonial Research Fellow, and Mrs. Marwick, whose

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PREFACE

THE material on which this book is based was collected during three periods in Nyasaland as a Research Fellow of the International African Institute: May–December 1935; April 1936–June 1937; July 1938–August 1939.

The choice had to be made whether to concentrate on one Ngoni area and omit the other, and also whether to present Ngoni culture as a common element in both areas or to regard them as separate cultural areas. I decided to gather material from northern and central Ngoniland, and accordingly spent about one-third of the time in north Nyasaland and about two-thirds in central Nyasaland. I used the Nyanja language all the time in central Ngoniland, and found that many people understood it in the north. I learned some Zulu, enough to read and hear Ngoni when spoken, but it was dying out as a language except for certain ceremonial and legal terms and expressions. Very few people spoke it in central Ngoniland; most of the older people knew it in the north and in one area it was still the language of the home in 1936.

The decision to present Ngoni culture as a common constituent of Ngoni life in all parts of Nyasaland was made after the material had been analysed. I decided also to attempt a reconstruction of Ngoni life at the time of the first European contacts, when the kingdoms were at the height of their power. Men and women were still alive, when I was in Ngoni villages, who had fought as warriors, who had organized large households, who had been present at the accession and death of the Paramounts. Their experiences were part of Ngoni culture and inseparable from much of what was regarded as essentially 'Ngoni' in the 1930's.

In both areas the informants were of two kinds: those who welcomed an anthropologist who would collect and record Ngoni history, patterns of social organization, and cultural behaviour of which they were intensely proud; and those who were reluctant at first to give information, either because they were Christians and had been at school and said they had 'forgotten'; or because they were suspicious of all Europeans, and did not want to speak of what to them was a treasured and hidden heritage.

Working in more than one language medium and bringing into the open Ngoni terms not as a rule used in the presence of Europeans presented a number of problems both of terminology and orthography. I have included a glossary of Ngoni terms used frequently in the book. There were several variations of the prefixes in common use with Ngoni words, as for example *abalumuzana*, *alumuzana*, *malumuzana*, all three of which were used in northern and central Ngoniland. The clicks,

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193 [194] 104 c, x, q, had disappeared in central Ngoniland, and were only pronounced correctly by the older Ngoni in the north. The honorific prefixes before clan names in addressing people, and before first names in reference, also varied according to area, age group and clan ranking. Apparent inconsistencies in spelling which occur in the book reflect these variations.

I have adopted English translations of certain Ngoni expressions and have used them throughout without quotation marks. An obvious example is Paramount for *inkosi*; and the use of 'house' for the Ngoni institution, and 'hut' for the dwelling place.

122 I acknowledge with gratitude the Fellowship given by the International African Institute which made possible the visits to Nyasaland; the grant from the London School of Economics for the research assistants, Miss Ruth Jones and Mr. G. P. Hall, who helped me collate material; the officials and missionaries in Nyasaland who gave hospitality and assisted me in every possible way; and the African people of the Ngoni kingdoms who, as my hosts in the villages and my helpers at all times, welcomed me into their midst and gave me an insight into their Ngoni culture.

London, 1955 MARGARET READ

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leave after meeting, withdrawing after a case in court, and initiating or concluding many other formal or less formal occasions. Children were taught to use the correct expressions and rebuked if they made a mistake, and it was one of the requirements in Ngoni families that a uniform standard of verbal politeness should accompany correct behaviour in posture.

CULTURAL AFFINITIES AND DIFFERENCES

The anthropologist working in Nyasaland is aware of the problems inherent in any attempt to isolate cultural features within any of the larger ethnic groups found there. There were no ethnographic field studies published of any of the other ethnic groups when I was working among the Ngoni. Mary Tew, in *Peoples of the Lake Nyasa Region*,[1] referred to scattered sources published before 1939, to which I had access; and from time to time Cewa informants wrote accounts of particular social institutions or ritual, from which I was able to make certain comparisons with Ngoni ritual and institutions. Some of the earlier accounts, such as that by Hodgson on the Cewa and Ngoni in the Dowa district,[2] assumed that all the cultural changes and 'borrowings' had been by the Ngoni from their Cewa neighbours, whereas I found in that area in 1939 Cewa villages where Ngoni cultural elements had been adopted.

Ngoni cultural affinities with South-eastern Bantu	*Local tribal differences*
Paramount and subordinate chiefs	Chiefs; no central authority except in Henga and Ngonde
Patrilineal descent Virilocal residence Marriage by *lobola*	Cewa and southern Tumbuka: Matrilineal descent, uxorilocal residence, marriage witnesses Henga: Patrilineal descent and virilocal residence
Clan exogamy „ hierarchy Houses Age sets	Cewa: No clan exogamy „ „ hierarchy *Mbumba* group Girls' initiation schools
Cattle complex Ancestor cult associated with cattle	Tumbuka Cewa in Dedza district: Formerly cattle-owners but no terminology left and no association with ancestor cult
Burial customs: in skin near krsal	Cewa and Tumbuka: Graves outside village; buried in a mat

[1] Tew, M., *op. cit.*
[2] Hodgson, A. G. O. 'Notes on the Achewa and Angoni of Dowa District, Nyasaland.' *J. Royal Anthropological Institute*, 1933, pp. 126–64.

6:Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FR5 Ngoni FR5

PREFACE BY THE REV. ALEXANDER HETHERWICK, D.D.

THE author of the following book has been for some years located among the Nyanja-speaking tribes of British Central Africa at Blantyre, and afterwards in Central Angoniland. His occupation as a member of the African Lakes Corporation has brought him into close contact with the native population of these districts. He has taken advantage of his opportunities to familiarize himself with the native language, of which he has acquired a very competent knowledge. In the course of his studies he made a collection of native folk-lore and stories which illustrate in the fullest degree the various constructions, idioms and grammatical forms of the language. These he has now published with the coöperation of the Directors of the Corporation.

The book is of value as containing examples of native life, habits and customs which are rapidly disappearing from the country before the advance of civilization and the work of Christian missions. The coming generation of natives will grow up under new influences, and the habits of thought and belief that ruled the lives of their fathers will soon be forgotten. Collections of folk-lore such as this book contains are therefore invaluable for the light they throw on a state of native life that is rapidly passing away.

To get into the heart of the native mind is a task well-nigh impossible for a European. The nearest

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past, and what of their present, will be clear to one who has made a more minute study of their Zulu ancestors than the writer had time or opportunity to do. Whatever be of merit in this little work, the writer owes to the Rev. Alexander Hetherwick, D.D., to whose kindness and courtesy in teaching him Chinyanja, when he first came to the country, he owes all that is best in his knowledge of the language.

MANDALA,
BRITISH CENTRAL AFRICA,
January 1, 1906.

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